

Story 1401 (1989 Tape 6)

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Satan in the Fountain

There was once a man so poor that he had to beg in order to get enough food to stay alive. One day Satan observed this poor man. Satan changed his form into that of a human being and approached that poor man, saying, "You ask for money for the sake of Allah. I shall not give you any money for the sake of Allah, but because you are a poor man, I shall do something to help you. I shall change myself into a mule. Take me to the market, sell me for a good price, and take your money home. After that, give no further thought to this experience. I am Satan."

The poor man accepted this offer. After Satan had changed himself into a fine mule, the poor man led it to the market-place and sold it for a high price. The mule was purchased by a man named Ahmet Ağa.¹

As Ahmet Ağa was leading his newly purchased mule home,

¹An ağa (English agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for

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he stopped at a fountain to allow the animal to drink some water. But of course the mule was not a real mule but Satan, and as soon as they reached the fountain he disappeared into the water spout. Ahmet Ağa almost went out of his mind. Looking closely into the spout of the fountain, he thought that he could still see the mule's ears. Running quickly into a nearby field, he tore up a handful of grass. He then waved the grass before the spout of the fountain in an effort to lure the mule out. The mule did not come forth, but it showed ears clearly out of the spout in order to make Ahmet Ağa even angrier

People passing by the fountain observed the strange behavior of Ahmet Ağa. He had some grass in his hand, and he waved this grass before the fountain and kept saying, "Hır! Hır! Hır!"² They said to each other, "Aman, aman!"³ Ahmet Ağ has gone mad! Poor man!" They grabbed him and took him immedi-

a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

²A sound used in Turkey for calling mules.

³Aman is a common exclamation in Turkish. It may (negatively) mean alas or oh, dear! More positively, it may suggest, oh, my goodness or the equivalent of wow! or golly!

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ately to a lunatic asylum. He explained the situation to the doctors there, but of course no one believed what he was saying.

Every day the doctors asked him, "Ahmet Ağa, where is your mule?"

Every day he gave them the same answer: "In the spout of the fountain." Every time he gave this answer they beat him and locked him up in a cell again.

Finally, one day Ahmet Ağa said to himself, "My situation cannot continue this way any longer. I'll simply tell them that I didn't really see anything in the spout of the fountain. Otherwise I may die of old age in this place."

The next day the doctors repeated their usual question, "Ahmet Ağa, where is your mule?"

"I don't know, because the truth of the matter is that I did not have a mule." When the doctors heard this, they decided that he had at last come to his senses, and so they released him from the lunatic asylum.

As he was going home, Ahmet Ağa went past the fountain, and as he did so, he could not help glancing at the spout. There he again saw the ears of the mule sticking out. He said, "I know! I know that you are there in the spout, but this time you go and explain the matter to the doctors!"